

DEPARTMENT OF

ATTORNEY GENERAL

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AG Nessel Files Felony Charges Against Jack Burkman, Jacob Wohl in Voter-Suppression Robocalls Investigation

Contact: Ryan Jarvi 517-599-2746

Agency: Attorney General

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LANSING – Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel has filed charges today against two political operatives for allegedly orchestrating a series of robocalls aimed at suppressing the vote in the November general election.

Jack Burkman, 54, and Jacob Wohl, 22, are each charged with:

- One count of election law – intimidating voters, a five-year felony;
- One count of conspiracy to commit an election law violation, a five-year felony;
- One count of using a computer to commit the crime of election law – intimidating voters, a seven-year felony; and
- Using a computer to commit the crime of conspiracy, a seven-year felony.

The charges were filed today in the 36th District Court in Detroit. Arraignment is pending for the defendants. The Attorney General's office will be working – with local law enforcement if necessary – to secure the appearance of each defendant in Michigan. It's too early to say if formal extradition will be necessary or if they will present themselves here voluntarily in the very near future.

Burkman, an Arlington, Virginia resident, and Wohl, a Los Angeles, California resident, allegedly attempted to discourage voters from participating in the general election by creating and funding a robocall targeted at certain urban areas, including Detroit. The calls were made in late August and went out to nearly 12,000 residents with phone numbers from the 313 area code.

During its investigation, Nessel's office communicated with attorneys general offices in New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Illinois, all of which reported similar robocalls being made to residents in their states who live in urban areas with significant minority populations. It's believed around 85,000 calls were made nationally, though an exact breakdown of the numbers of calls to each city or state are not available.

Attorney General Nessel's office is also grateful for the help of California Attorney General Xavier Becerra, his staff and other local law enforcement officials who assisted special agents from the Michigan Department of Attorney General as part of this investigation.

"Any effort to interfere with, intimidate or intentionally mislead Michigan voters will be met with swift and severe consequences," Nessel said. "This effort specifically targeted minority voters in an attempt to deter them from voting in the November election. We're all well aware of the frustrations caused by the millions of nuisance robocalls flooding our cell phones and landlines each day, but this particular message poses grave consequences for our democracy and the principles upon which it was built. Michigan voters are entitled to a full, free and fair election in November and my office will not hesitate to pursue those who jeopardize that."

Attorney General Nessel and Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson issued a **press release in August** after news of the robocall surfaced.

"I have zero tolerance for anyone who would seek to deceive citizens about their right to vote," Benson said. "I am grateful to the Attorney General for her swift and thorough investigation, putting anyone else who would seek to undermine citizens' fundamental rights on notice that we will use every tool at our disposal to dispel false rhetoric and seek justice on behalf of every voter who is targeted and harmed by any attempt to suppress their vote."

The recorded robocall message warns people about being "finessed into giving your private information to the man" and urges them to "beware of vote by mail."

The caller, who claims to be associated with an organization founded by Burkman and Wohl, falsely tells people that mail-in voting, in particular, will allow personal information to become part of a special database used by police to track down old warrants and by credit card companies to collect outstanding debts. The caller also deceptively claims the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will use the information to track people for mandatory vaccines. However, none of that is true.

The Attorney General encourages anyone who received this call on or about Aug. 26 and who wishes to file a complaint about it to contact her office by calling 517-335-7650.

Information callers may be asked to provide in their complaint will include:



- Complainant's name, address and contact information;
- Date and time of when the robocall was received;
- Phone number of the line where the call was received;
- Number displayed on caller ID when the call was received;
- Whether the robocall went to voicemail or was answered live;
- The complainant's recollection of the robocall content and their thoughts about the call;
- Whether the complainant is and has been a Michigan resident for six months or more; and
- Whether the complainant is a registered voter or is eligible to vote.

There is very little, if any, evidence to substantiate claims that mail-in ballots lead to fraud, as many states have successfully conducted the process for years. Michigan has had absentee voting for more than 60 years. In November 2018, Michigan voters overwhelmingly approved Proposal 3, which amended Michigan's Constitution and gave all Michigan voters the constitutional right to vote by absentee ballot without excuse.

[Click here to listen to an audio recording of the robocall.](#)

[Click here to view a copy of Burkman and Wohl's charging documents.](#)

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Please note: *A criminal charge is merely an allegation and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty. The Attorney General's office does not provide photos of defendants, but one may be available from the booking agency.*

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